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SUBJECT: THE VISIT OF THE MNF-I COMMANDER TO THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Classified By: PM Counselor C.A. Hudson for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) Commander David Petraeus met with King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and the primary cabinet officials responsible for the national security of Saudi Arabia. The meetings were frank yet quite cordial and appeared to establish Petraeus as an official likely to gain easy future access. END SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) Commander David Petraeus and his delegation were received by HM the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on June 30th. The granting of the audience was itself a clear sign of the improving ties between the United States and the Kingdom and of the personal esteem in which the General is held. Immediately after the meeting, the King was rushed to the airport to begin his travel to a much anticipated conference on inter-faith dialogue.

¶3. (S) Over the course of his 43-hour visit to the Kingdom General Petraeus engaged in discussions spanning the full range of Saudi and regional security interests with the officials primarily charged with the day-to-day protection of the Kingdom. In addition to the initial audience with HM the King, General Petraeus met separately with HRH Prince Mugren bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Head of the General Intelligence Presidency; HRH Prince Khalid bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Assistant Minister of Defense and Aviation; and, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdulaziz Al Saud Assistant Minister of Interior for Security Affairs. NOTE: Prince Mugren is the brother of the King and is considered, by most observers, to be among the two or three leading contenders to emerge as the next Crown Prince. Despite their titles as &assistant8 ministers, both Princes Khalid and Mohammed are charged with the day-to-day operations of their ministries in the place and stead of their fathers Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz (the Crown Prince and Minister of Defense and Aviation) and Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz (the Minister of Interior Affairs). Each session began with a detailed and well received briefing from General Petraeus on the status of U.S. operations in Iraq. The meeting with Prince Khalid also brought out Saudi concerns in the, often onerous, clearance process required for both Foreign Military (FMS) and Direct Sales. The Prince,s comments quickly moved to their sensitivity over U.S. policies governing the releasability of arms and defense technology for sale to the Kingdom. He drew comparisons with neighbors like Kuwait when he questioned how other states were cleared for sales that were denied to Saudi Arabia) a long time ally. He reiterated his oft noted complaint about the Saudi purchase of F-15s and receiving an aircraft &with little more capability than an F-58. Visa processing for military applicants also surfaced as a point of contention. Direct (and at times FMS) sales of weapon systems or equipment often require training in civilian facilities which would not permit use of official (A2) visas and the alternative business visas (B1 or B1/B2) would require a personal interview and fingerprinting. From the perspective of Prince Khalid, such a requirement for a military officer would be demeaning and he would not permit one of his officers to apply under those conditions. (Note: His comments should be taken seriously. He halted all training for MODA personnel in the United States for two years in response to previous objections to U.S.

releasability policies.)

¶4. (S) The session with Prince Mohammed bin Naif focused on the Kingdom's counter- terrorism and border security efforts, as well as, the bilateral Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) program. Prince Mohammed and Under Secretary of State (P) Nicholas Burns co-chair the Joint Working Group that oversees the CIP's planning and development. Prince Mohammed displayed clear enthusiasm about the prospect of rapid implementation of CIP and encouraged General Petraeus to play a major role in the program's development as U.S. Central Command Commander. General Petraeus and the Prince also discussed the current status of efforts to agree upon process modalities for fashioning an interagency Security Assistance) like organization that would parallel, in function, the operations of the U.S. Military Training Mission (USMTM) or the Office of the Program Manager-Saudi Arabian National Guard (OPM-SANG).

¶5. (S) U.S. efforts to secure and agree upon the modalities for Saudi financial assistance for Iraqi development was the central theme of the General Petraeus, discussions with Prince Mugren. The General had been specifically referred to the Prince for discussions on this matter during the earlier Royal Audience. Owing to the diplomatic, technical and legal complexities of the issue; however, Prince Mugren bowed to the limits of his authority and committed only to seek the advise and counsel of the King.

Al-Maliki still Viewed with Suspicion

¶6. (S) Early in the Royal Audience, General Petraeus presented the compliments and best wishes of the President, Ambassador Crocker, and other American officials; however, when he mentioned Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, the King interrupted with &I can,t accept that8 (only half in jest). Even after the General's briefing on the improvements achieved over the past months and the King's recognition of progress there was no indication of a softening of Court skepticism of al-Maliki, his intentions, or the nature of his ties to Iran. Indeed, the King used the discussion to tack into a dialogue on the security of the Saudi northern border as a vulnerability of the Kingdom. While reference to the northern border, as a potential conduit for insurgents and war refugees, has been common over the years, the King spoke of drug, arms, and other contraband in a manner normally reserved for the southern border with Yemen.

COMMENT: The General's reception was among the warmest and most cordial of any senior U.S. flag officer in recent memory. The King appeared to study each movement and response closely and, judging from his response, a solid foundation for the future was laid. END COMMENT.

FRAKER